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ABSTRACT

Almost 400 college seniors (202 Anglos, 158 Chicanos, 39 Blacks) attending a large Southwestern public university completed a survey instrument to elicit what educational goals they perceived as important, whether the university had helped them realize those goals, and whether there were ethnic differences in perceived importance and realization of goals. Goals in the following categories were investigated: academics/career, student involvement at the university, and personal growth and development. Results show that the most important educational goals for all groups were those dealing with academic and career issues, thus supporting the idea of a general trend toward materialistic goals, and that all groups felt that the university had helped them realize these goals. All groups were also interested in student involvement and personal growth goals (though to lesser degrees) but, by and large, Blacks felt that the university had not helped them realize their goals in these two categories. (CMG)

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Ethnic Differences in Realizing Educational Goals

Abstract

In the 60s and early 70s the educational goals of students were oriented towards personal growth and student involvement (Levine, 1980). By the late 70s, however, the educational goals of students became increasingly materialistic (Astin, 1977). None of the existing literature on educational goals of students considered ethnic differences. This study documents the educational goals of students at the start of the 80s and investigates ethnic differences in those goals.

Ethnic Differences in Realizing Educational Goals

Today's college students have vastly different educational goals and aspirations than students of the 60s and 70s. According to Levine (1980), undergraduates in 1969 were "learning to get along with people" and "formulating the values and goals for my life". In constrast, in 1976, the top two reasons for attending college were to obtain a "detailed grasp of a special field" and to receive "training and skills for an occupation". "Learning to get along with people" and "formulating values and goals" had dropped to third and fourth place. For three quarters of the freshmen, "getting a better job" was the major reason for attending college. Furthermore, a majority of students indicated that they were attending university with a specific career in mind (Levine, 1980).

Further evidence of the change from developing a philosophy of life towards a growing interest in materialistic goals such as wealth and status was also noted in the late 1970s. For example, Astin (1977) found that the top goals for freshmen were "becoming an authority in my field", "helping others who are in difficulty", and "raising a family". Later, Astin (1979) in a national survey of freshmen found that to "get a better job", "obtain a general education" and "make more money" were the predominant reasons to attend college.

In contrast to this general trend, Carmondy, Fenske and Scott (1972) found that securing vocational or professional training, developing the mind and intellectual abilities and learning to enjoy life were important goals for students in 1964 and 1965. One reason for these differences was

that the Carmondy, Fenske and Scott study (1972) was based on community college students rather than four year college students.

Nearly all studies on the educational goals of students have been conducted on samples of white college students with little or no attention paid to ethnic differences in importance and realization of educational goals. Since 1965, there has been an increase in the number of minority students enrolled in college (Carnegie Council, 1980). With a diverse student population in the 80s, it is important to document whether educational goals for students have changed and to investigate whether or not these educational goals differ by ethnicity. This information is useful to a university interested in making changes to its academic or student services programming.

This study investigated the educational goals of seniors graduating from a large university and sought to determine ethnic differences in importance and realization of their goals.

Methodology

Sample:

From the 2,959 students graduating from a large Southwestern public university during Spring, 1982, 67 Blacks, 260 Chicanos and a random sample of 300 Anglos were selected for the study. Usable surveys were returned by 202 Anglos, 158 Chicanos and 39 Blacks. This represents an overall response rate of 64%. The individual ethnic response rate included: 67% for Anglos, 58% for Blacks and 60% for Chicanos. The respondents included more men (54%) than women (46%) with similar proportions of each sex found within each ethnic group.

Instrument:

An instrument was developed to assess: general perceptions, general satisfaction, educational goals, student involvement, utilization of resources and post-graduation plans. For the purpose of this study only the section on educational goals will be reported. The educational goals were grouped into three categories -- academics, student involvement at the university and personal growth and development. Students were asked to respond to the following nine educational goals in one of three ways: (1) "this goal was important and the university helped me achieve it", (2) "this goal was important and the university did not help me achieve it", and (3) "this goal is not important at all".

Academics

- To increase my knowledge in an academic field
- To prepare for a new career
- To improve my knowledge, technical skills or competence for job/career

Student Involvement

- To become actively involved in student life and campus activities
- To increase my participation in cultural events

Personal Growth and Development

- To increase my self-confidence
- To improve my leadership skills
- To learn skills that will enrich my daily life and make me a more complete person
- To become involved in contemporary political and social issues

Analysis:

In considering ethnic differences in educational goals, the Maximum Likelihood - Ratio X2 (MLR) was used an an alternative to the Pearson's X2 (see Kennedy, 1983). While the calculated values of X2 and the MLR are usually extremely close (see Bishop, Fienberg and Holland, 1975), the ease of decomposition for determining the contribution of individual cells and interaction terms makes the MLR the preferred statistic in this application. Only those items that were statistically significant are discussed. Percentages of students indicating educational goals that were important to them and that the university helped them achieve are reported for the overall sample in Table 1.

Results

Anglo, Black and Chicano students reported different levels of importance for educational goals dealing with academics. For example, to "increase knowledge in an academic field" was an important goal and one the university helped 96% of Anglos to achieve, compared to 87% of Chicanos and 84% of Blacks ($X2=16.64$, $p<.001$). Similarly, "preparing for a new career" was an important educational goal to 84% of Anglos, compared to 76% of Chicanos and 74% of Blacks.

There were also ethnic differences in educational goals dealing with personal growth and development. While 66% of Anglos felt that "learning skills to enrich every day life" was an important goal that the university

helped them achieve, only 57% of Chicanos and 44% of Blacks indicated that the university had helped them with this goal ($X2=12.5$, $p<.01$). Fifty five percent of Blacks felt that the university had not helped them with this important goal. Similarly, while 56% of Anglos and 58% of Chicanos indicated that "increasing self-confidence" was an important goal the university helped them achieve, 62% of Blacks indicated that the university did not help them achieve this goal ($X2=9.04$, $p<.06$).

Thirty-eight percent of Anglos and 39% of Chicanos indicated that "becoming involved in contemporary social and political issues" was an important goal which the university helped them achieve, while 41% of the Blacks indicated it was an important goal which the university did not help them achieve ($X2=9.96$, $p<.05$). Also, 50% of the Anglos and 52% of the Chicanos indicated that "improving life skills" was an important goal that the university had helped them achieve, compared to 62% of Blacks who indicated that this was an important goal that the university did not help them achieve ($X2=8.17$, $p<.09$).

The two educational goals dealing with student involvement were only marginally significant. Forty-one percent of the Anglos and 40% of the Chicanos felt that "increasing participation in cultural and social events" was an important goal they were helped with, compared to the 51% of the Blacks who indicated they received no help with this goal ($X2=8.48$, $p<.08$).

Discussion

The two areas of consideration in this study were the educational goals that students considered important and whether or not the university

helped them meet their goals. Equally important were ethnic differences in the realization of educational goals.

The results support the general trend identified by Astin (1977) and Levine (1980) that students are becoming increasingly interested in materialistic goals. The most important educational goals for students at this university were those dealing with academics and career issues. The ethnic differences found were not in the perceived importance of goals but rather in the perception that the university did not help them achieve those goals.

There were fewer differences between Blacks and Chicanos than between these two groups as compared to Anglos in importance of educational goals. While all groups were interested in academics and career, and to lesser degrees personal growth and development and student involvement, by and large, Blacks felt that the university had not helped them attain their educational goals dealing with personal growth and development and student involvement.

Implications

This information is useful for the documentation of students' educational goals for the 80s. Furthermore this information can be utilized by a university interested in making appropriate changes to student service programming. Since students' academic and career goals are consistent with those of the university, no overall programmatic changes in these areas are necessary. But since there are ethnic differences in goals dealing with issues of personal growth and development as well as student involvement, the implementation of programming to meet those goals is necessary.

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TABLE 1

Percentage of Students Indiciating Educational Goals Which Were Important and Which the University Did and Did Not Help Them Achieve By Ethnicity

Items	RACE								OVERALL	
	ANGLOS Percentage		BLACKS Percentage		CHICANOS Percentage		x^2	p	Percentage	
	Important UT Help	Important No Help	Important UT Help	Important No Help	Important UT Help	Important No Help			Important UT Help	Important No Help
Academics										
To increase my knowledge in an academic field	96.50	3.50	84.62	15.38	87.10	10.97	16.64	<.001	91.62	7.67
To prepare for a new career	84.92	12.56	73.68	21.05	76.13	20.00	5.55	<.25	80.36	16.33
To improve my knowledge, technical skills or competence for job/career	86.29	12.18	79.49	15.38	82.80	13.38	3.03	<.60	84.22	12.98
Student Involvement										
To become actively involved in student life and campus activities	41.21	25.13	23.08	51.28	39.61	27.92	10.48	<.04	38.78	28.83
To increase my participation in cultural and social events	50.75	27.14	33.33	51.28	47.44	32.69	8.48	<.08	47.72	31.73
Personal Growth and Development										
To increase my self-confidence	56.00	38.00	35.90	61.54	58.60	37.58	9.04	<.06	55.05	40.15
To improve my leadership skills	50.50	39.00	33.33	61.54	52.56	40.38	8.17	<.09	49.62	41.77
To learn skills that will enrich my daily life and make me a more complete person	66.83	29.15	44.74	55.26	57.42	38.71	12.50	<.01	74.74	35.46
To become involved in contemporary political and social issues	38.00	21.00	38.46	41.03	39.35	27.74	9.96	<.05	38.58	25.63